

Northfield Open Space Committee

Minutes, June 17, 2014

Items in italics require action prior to next meeting.

Present: Mike Barry, Julia Blyth, Bob Hall, Sue Handren, Joanne McGee, Sue Ross, Joe Stacy, Jenny Tufts, Jerry Wagener, Chair.

Absent: Kate Rossiter (LOA)

Guests: Chris LaPointe, Project Manager, Trust for Public Land; Lucy Livingston

The meeting opened at 7:00.

1. Update on TPL option on NMH land:

Chris LaPointe distributed four project maps: 1) Locus map showing property with adjacent conservation land; 2) BioMap2 Core habitat map; 3) Close-up of location map; and 4) Assessor's lot map. He began his briefing with an explanation of the project timeline. The option for due diligence of the East Northfield Water company expires June 27, 2014, and TPL expects a full report from Weston and Sampson in a few weeks. The option to purchase the property can extend until June 2015; TPL will be doing title and survey work. TPL hopes to make a final decision in March 2015, and, if all goes well, with closing June 2015. The appraisal came in at "just shy of" \$3 million. Since the option to purchase is \$2.3 million, part of the sale will be a bargain sale. TPL found no environmental issues, but is working a survey of boundary line encroachments and on the titles and encumbrances of the 65 parcels which are included in the project.

Conservation land: Chris outlined the conservation options available for the majority of the property excluding the Water Company land. The State Landscape Partnership grant requires a minimum of 500 acres and provides a 50% match up to \$1.5 million. The deadline is July 17, 2014, and funds must be spent by June 2015. It can include a landowner bargain sale and requires two or more partners in the project application. Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is very interested and will discuss the project at its Lands Committee meeting in July. Chris and the OS Committee discussed the question of ownership of the parcel and the management of large parcels. Do we want the town to own the land or DCR? The committee discussed possibilities of management of this large parcel. Do we have the capacity? Could the State own the land but partner with the town or with a non-profit such as Northfield Watershed for stewardship? Chris will discuss these options with DCR which, in the past, has created partnerships with local entities for trail maintenance, stewardship and security. DCR could hold the conservation restriction with the land owned by the town. *Jerry will report to the Selectboard the committee's interest in exploring the partnership idea.*

Other sources of money are a Federal Community Forest Grant which provides up to \$400,000 or a Federal Legacy Grant. TPL would hear about the Community Forest Grant June 2015 and the money must be spent by the fall. Forest Legacy process would take several years.

East Northfield Water Company: Chris discussed the assessment or master plan by Weston & Sampson which covers infrastructure needs, rate payer variables, possibility of losing the DEP waiver, the possibility of having to build a filtration plant, and likelihood of finding a new owner. The Water Company is extremely well-run, the forest is managed well, the bird management is good, and the company is installing a new UV system. The maintenance needs are the normal problems

attended with ongoing work. W & S tested the water flow and is now running financial modeling. Chris will attend the next meeting of the OSC on July 15.

2. **Community Park Report:** Joe Stacy reported that the Recreation Committee voted unanimously to support the idea of a subcommittee but with Joe and Sue Handren as equal votes representing the Rec Commission. The Open Space Committee voted that the Rec Commission and the Open Space Committee each have two equal members on the committee and that the Selectboard appoint three others from a variety of “populations”. Jenny/Sue 7-0. Julia will be one representative from Open Space, and Jerry will ask Kate also to be a rep.

NMH does not want to exclude the landfill property from the land for sale, but would be willing to sell just the lower field. Another option is a 20 year lease/purchase agreement. However, Jack Spanbauer is adamantly opposed to anything with landfill responsibility. The landfill has not been capped long enough for problems to appear.

3. **Update on Crag Mt.:** Josh Surette, the NPS rep for this part of the New England Trail, reports that the appraisals (both fee and easement) are finished and negotiations are in process.

4. **Update on pipeline:** Kinder Morgan will send representatives to a meeting with the Selectboard in July or August. Julia is working on a non-binding resolution for either a Selectboard meeting or a town meeting. She also announced a pipeline walk which follows the pipeline route. Kinder Morgan will file with FERC in October. *Julia will let us know the date of the Selectboard meeting.*

5. **Conservation Restriction on Ames property:** The Selectboard approved a letter to support a LAND Grant being prepared by Jamie Pottern of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. The LAND grant would provide 60% of the land cost, about \$150,000 (Appraisal ca \$250,000). There will be a public accessible trail built to a lovely beaver pond on the lower portion of the property. The town will need to provide some of the money but now there are at least three projects competing for limited CPA funds: TPL on NMH land; Ames CR; Community Park. Jamie will present the project to the Finance Committee on June 26.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. The next meeting will be July 15, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McGee